

RAH! RAH! RADIO

BY RAFE GIBBS



The coed is chief engineer of Cornell's station WVBR (Voice of the Big Red). She's repairing the equipment

THE most insolent, idealistic, raucous, sentimental, daring, conservative industry in the nation today is college radio. It is also the poorest financially and the fastest-growing.

If anybody would like to argue any one of these points, welcome, welcome. The Intercollegiate Broadcasting System, operated by students and for students on campuses all over the country, thrives on argument. Choose your own side, pro or con, on any question; name your own weapon, reason or roughhouse. The collegians are virtuosos of persuasion.

When certain Yale men felt that the Princeton campus radio was presenting the football situation in an unfair, or unfavorable-to-Yale light, they took the argument into the enemy's territory.

They drove to Princeton, deployed into scouting and attacking parties, tiptoed into the WPRU studio, strong-armed the eight persons they found there, including the announcer, engineer and commentator, lashed them to chairs, placed their own previously prepared platter of football commentary on the turntable, and predicted to the shocked radio listeners of Princeton that Yale would win Saturday's game—which, as it happened, Yale did.

But within minutes after the offending platter began to grind, Princeton listeners came to the rescue, pouring out of houses all over the campus. In a soul-satisfying riot, they roughed up the invaders and threw them out. The next week a giant "P" was burned into the grass at Yale's stadium.

Of course from an elderly point of view, all that was proved by this melee was that boys will be boys.

But sometimes the college radio boys devote their talents to higher purposes. Away at campus problems, they work for tolerance, they try high-minded experiments in music and the drama, and some but not all tackle national and international affairs.

The radio talent of Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, protested the high prices of books in a little skit entitled The President's Freshman (no connection intended with the President of their own faculty). A part of the skit ran something like this:

President Slushbottom: Now, my boy, the thing you must do is buy textbooks.

My boy: Yes, sir.

President Slushbottom: You will need Psychology I, by Slushbottom, \$4; Sociology Made Easy, by Slushbottom, \$5; Sociology Made Impossible, by Slushbottom, \$4; and Sociology, by Slushbottom, \$6, a comprehensive work. Got those books, my boy?

My boy: Yes, sir, but . . .

President Slushbottom: You can stop me, my boy. I know what you were going to do. You cannot buy these books secondhand. You must try to sell them at the end of the year. And every year, that's the Slushbottom way. Now, think I can live on my salary, do you?

Professors in some colleges objected to the spread custom of broadcasting Music to the People, expressing doubt as to the compatibility of music with mental effort. But the Intercollegiate

Men from Brown and girls from Pembroke College demonstrate a studio technique that is informal, fresh, strictly collegiate. In a round-table session over Brown's WBRU, students discussed birth control



At Brown the "underground" radio is only a problem, not politics. This group is checking transmission



The Intercollegiate Broadcasting System has very little money, limited facilities and a small audience. But it is the fastest-growing and freest-talking network in the nation

PHOTOGRAPHS FOR COLLIER'S BY CLAUDE HUSTON

em lined up a galaxy of psychologists on approved, for working purposes, that mu- rather than hindered study. Classical s, not dance music.

WBRU of Brown University invited de- question: Should Brown students be o eat in college mess halls? The result such a resounding "No!" accompanied marks about college food, that the ad- gave up all attempts to legislate appetites.

WVBR of Cornell University came to the nonfraternity students who claimed they discrimination in the matter of getting de- at football games. The system of seat was revised.

ians, in a series of round-table inter- faculty members, asked the president, W. Dodds: "Does Princeton discrimi- Negroes on admissions?"

nd the president.

g that it was curious that there were Negroes in a student body of 3,500, a ed why applications for admission car- tion as to race. Not, the president said, s of discrimination.

was said on the subject. But WPRU- ith interest that next year's application ot ask about race.

won a minor victory over college regu- n its series of programs dazzlingly but y entitled Sex after Six. The idea was he "all out by six" rule for women visit-

ing in men's dormitories. The students, contending that 6 P.M. was too early to break up a cocktail party, plugged for an extension to 9 P.M. The college authorities compromised on 7 P.M.

College radio was born at Brown University in 1936, when David Borst and George Abraham hooked up low-power transmitters to interdormitory heating pipes. Within a few years 12 more colleges established stations, applying the technique now generally in use, of hooking up to regular electric wires. In 1940 these stations formed the Intercollegiate Broadcasting System, a strong central organization with headquarters in New York, on which any college may call for help in solving its radio problems. David Linton is its only full-time officer, but many professionals, including the two Brown men who started the whole thing, are on call.

After the slowdown of the war, college radio has picked up again. It is twice as big a thing today as it was a year ago, and it promises to be twice as big again by this time next year. It now reaches more than 100,000 listeners through broadcasting stations in 32 colleges and universities scattered through the country. IBS reports that 20 more stations will go on the air in September.

In addition IBS has 18 more "trial" members, whose stations are under construction. Plus applications for membership and calls for technical help from many more student groups. Plus plans for regional, national and finally international hookups with students all over the world.

College radio has limitless ambition. It even hopes, by grace of sponsors, (Continued on page 52)



Students are often interviewed on the campus. Questions can be more controversial than commercial radio allows

Cayuga's waters an on-the-spot crew from WVBR the treetops to broadcast the Cornell boat race

The Cornell outfit bought this 1922-model station wagon, for use as a mobile unit, but couldn't often take it out because of flat tires. Makeshift equipment, however, discourages few campus broadcasters



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THE PROOF! 1297 men tested the new, different Palmolive Brushless Shave Cream Way, and—no matter how they shaved before—3 out of 4 reported more comfortable, actually smoother shaves! Here's all you do:

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Get a Giant Tube
or Big 9-oz. Jar Today!

RAH! RAH! RADIO

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to become self-supporting, a happy state already achieved by a few of its members. Local advertisers—restaurants, florists, barbers, hairdressers, clothes shops—gladly buy collegiate air time. A few national advertisers have done the same, with good results.

The joyful thing about college radio is that it can do practically anything it pleases—from defying the laws of physics in its homemade transmitting equipment to discussing birth control on the air. (In a round-table discussion two men from Brown and two girls from Pembroke College concluded that there was no insurmountable objection to birth control.) College radio can and sometimes does commit the crime of crimes in radio, which is, keep silence. This happens when somebody loses the key to the studio, or when a turntable quits turning, or when the announcer of the Wake-Up Club sleeps through the alarm.

Perfect Freedom from Taboos

Since college stations are nonprofit, low-power, short-range outfits, they don't have to have Federal Communications Commission licenses. Since they don't cater to kiddies or elderly citizens with blue-law ideas, they are free from most of the taboos that restrain freedom of speech on the commercial air. They can use swear words when the script calls for them, and motherhood, to them, is not necessarily sacred in the manner of the soap operas. Actually in some college scripts Mother is depicted as a selfish old harriidan.

Since the college stations are not officially speaking for the college to the community at large, but are simply talking amongst themselves on the campus, the college authorities generally give them their head. Since everybody works for free and there is no pay roll to meet, they can, if they wish, display an Olympian indifference toward would-be sponsors. Harvard's station said "No, thanks," to an offer of a popular cigarette commercial, because Harvard simply can't stand singing commercials. Brigham Young declined the same commercial because the Mormons who run the school don't believe in smoking.

Most stations broadcast at least one hour of classical music a day, from records. They also arrange for as many "live" long-hair musical events as they can—such as the concert series at Cornell featuring Marian Anderson and other

artists, and the symphony orchestra and chapel choir programs at Princeton. The great musical event of the year will be a 26-week series of now being prepared by IBS college stations.

Robert Landon, a Boston music graduate (and a Stanford campus radio-station alumnus), Europe interviewing young composers in each major city, also arranging for recording major works. His comments on works will be put onto 26 pages of distribution to all IBS members a year.

Every collegiate little dramatic workshop gets its turn to air, preferably with original plays, again the lack of taboos encourages production. Ernest Kinoy, a student at Columbia University, New York, of his scripts to commercial one fine script of his which was on Columbia University's W. not salable commercially because of subject—the effect of a national act of religious persecution called Dream into Egypt.

Station KUOI at the University of Idaho is experimenting with plays, putting on one act each week.

Most stations, in imitation of commercial radio, have inquiring reporter quiz shows, bingo shows and participation stunt shows.

Their weakest point seems to be news and comment on news. Most college stations have regular news programs. About once a week the round-table discussions of world events, or Palestine, or the Nations, but their own polls in such shows are not popular.

Cornell, one of the few stations with its own Associated Press telegraph line, broadcast good news summaries last November's elections, the whole town of Ithaca with news—for the regular local station goes off the air at sundown.

The regular radio industry is not interested in the collegians with interest. for the last several years college-radio alumni have found regular radio, as technicians, as announcers.

College radio is beginning to make its mark in the same way that the stock market serves Broadway—ground for new talent.

THE END

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COLLIER'S

Collier's for July